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STAR WARS

Part VI

THE ASHES OF JEDHA

It is a period of high tension in the galaxy. The Galactic Empire has sent Queen Trios of Shu-Torun to Jedha in an attempt to collect the remaining weapon-powering kyber crystals that survived the Death Star's attack.

Recently, rebel leaders Princess Leia and Luke Skywalker, as well as smuggler Han Solo, have joined forces with Partisans Benthic and ex-rebel fighter Ubin. Together, the group has launched an attack on the Empire's orbital drill threatening to endanger the lives of the struggling civilians.

However, as Luke sneaks aboard the Imperial drill to shut down their weapons systems, Benthic falls in battle, leaving Han in charge of the Partisan army. And Princess Leia soon finds herself face-to-face with Queen Trios....

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Aboard the Leviathan, Jedha.
I'M SORRY WE'RE ONLY MEETING IN SUCH UNFORTUNATE CIRCUMSTANCES, PRINCESS LEIA.
I'M QUITE THE ADMIRER.
AOOAAARRP!
DON'T YOU DARE! YOU'LL MAKE HER ANGRY!
SHE'S GOT A BLASTER!
YOU DID VERY WELL.
YOU MIGHT HAVE GOTTEN AWAY WITH IT IF IT WEREN'T FOR MY OWN PRIVATE SECURITY SYSTEM...
PLEASE. DON'T GLOAT, IT'S TEDIOUS.
PUNCH ME.

AH, EXCELLENT. A LITTLE PRIVACY. AND ALSO...WELL STRUCK.
WAS PUGILISM PART OF A PRINCESS' EDUCATION ON ALDERAAN? SHU-TORUN NORMALLY STRESSES TARGET SHOOTING.
LET'S CUT TO THE CHASE...
...IT WAS YOU WHO LEAKED THE PLANS FOR THIS THING.
WHY?

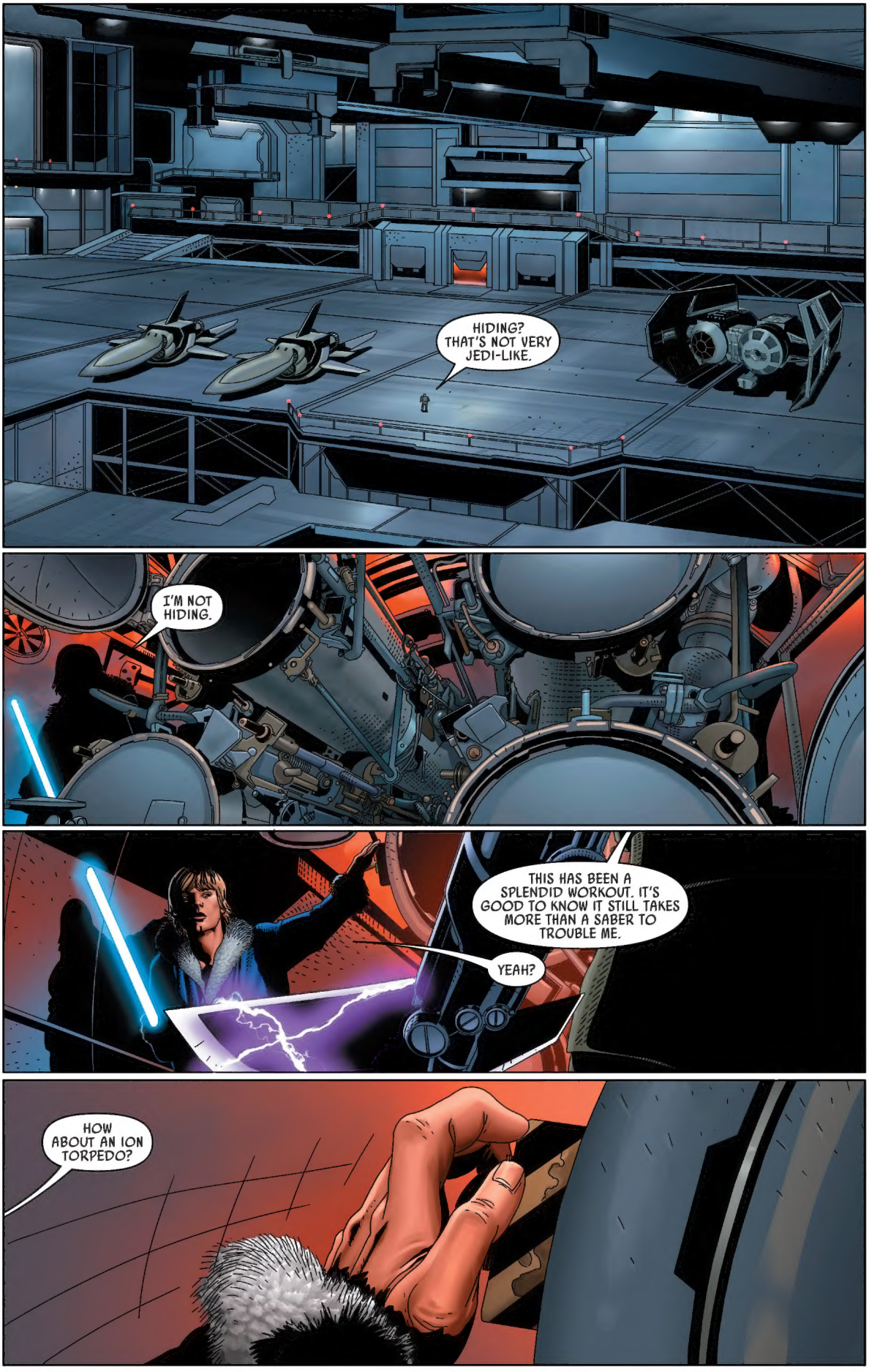
OKAY, ON MY COUNT. ONE, TWO, THREE, AND...
HELLO, BRIDGE! THIS IS A REBEL RAID! STEP AWAY FROM YOUR CONSOLES SO WE CAN DRIVE THIS THING STRAIGHT INTO--
OH.
WE'RE LATE FOR THE FIGHT...

"...OR THE FIGHT'S MOVED ON."
THE LIGHTSABER IS A VERY PRETTY WEAPON.
GRACEFUL. DELICATE. FEMININE, EVEN.
AND REFLECTING BLASTER BOLTS? AN IMPRESSIVE TRICK, IF YOU CAN PULL IT OFF.
WHY THE HELL WOULD ANYONE SHOOT BLASTER BOLTS AT SOMEONE WHO CAN BOUNCE THEM BACK?

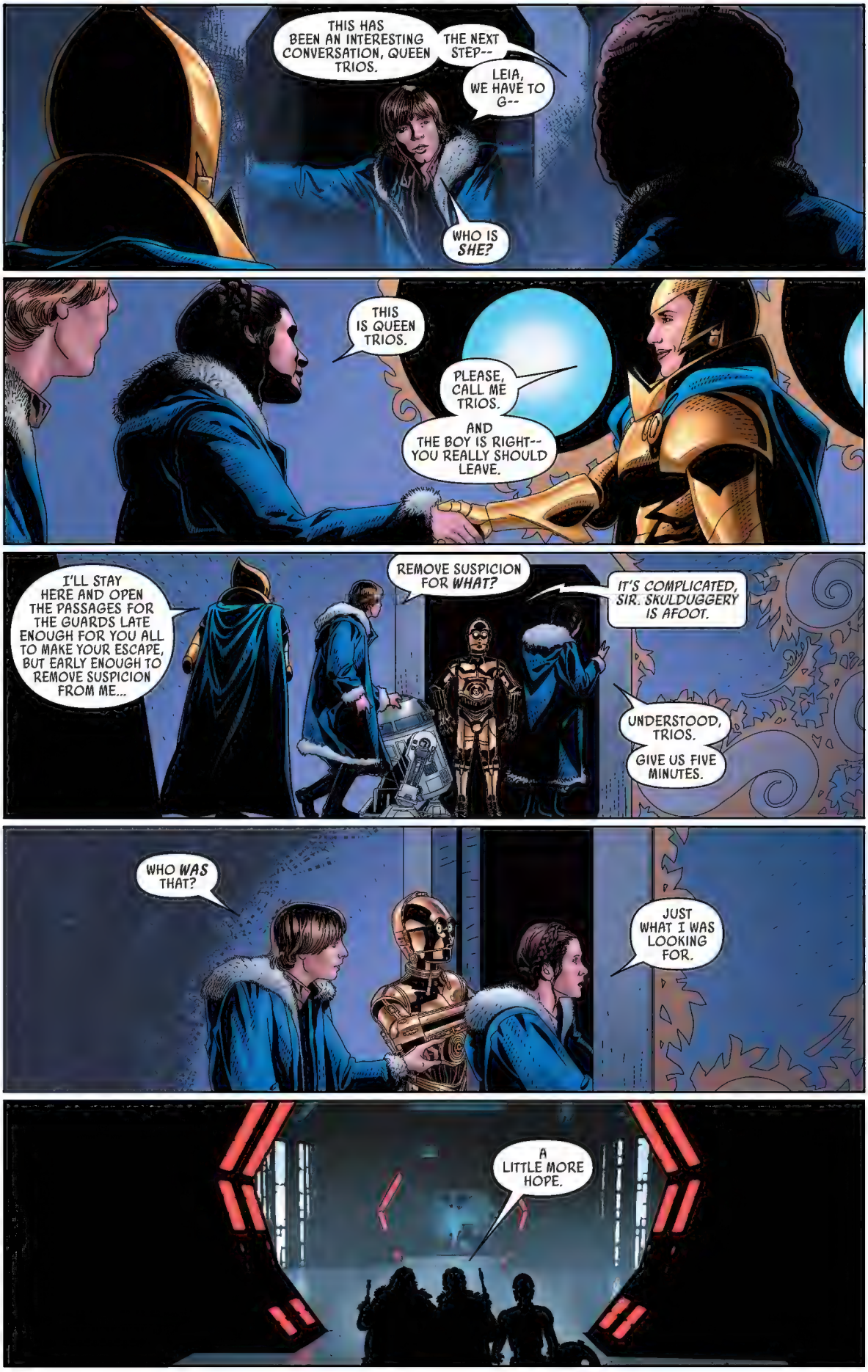
WHOA!
IF I WERE IN CHARGE, I'D HAVE OUTFITTED THE CLONES WITH FLAMETHROWERS WHEN FRYING JEDI.
WHAT KIND OF *MONSTER* ARE YOU?
THE WINNING KIND.

DARTH VADER ASSASSINATED MY FATHER, AND GAVE ME THE THRONE.
HE THEN GAVE ME A CHUNK OF ALDERAAN TO SHOW EXACTLY WHAT HAPPENS TO THOSE WHO OPPOSE THE EMPIRE.
I TOOK HIS LESSON, THOUGH PERHAPS NOT IN THE WAY HE INTENDED.
I DECIDED THEN AND THERE THAT IT'D NEVER HAPPEN TO SHU-TORUN.
THE EMPIRE WILL NOT BE OUR END. I'LL DO ANYTHING TO STOP THAT.
THEY ARE WEAKER THAN THEY HAVE BEEN FOR TWENTY YEARS. SHU-TORUN CANNOT OPPOSE THEM OPENLY. WE'VE REBELLED BEFORE, AND BEEN CRUSHED...
THE EMPIRE CAN NEVER DOUBT ME...BUT THAT MEANS THEY'LL NEVER KNOW WHERE MY TRUE LOYALTY LIES.
SO YOU'RE OBEYING, BUT ALSO SABOTAGING THEIR EFFORTS.
QUITE. I AM PREPARED TO SACRIFICE THIS BEAUTIFUL, EXPENSIVE MONSTROSITY. BETTER IT IS DESTROYED. IT'D ONLY BE USED TO FURTHER THE EMPIRE'S GOALS.
ITS LOSS RENDERS ME ABOVE SUSPICION. AND NOW?
I AM A QUEEN IN SEARCH OF AN ALLIANCE.
A REBEL ONE.
OH, MY!

YOU'RE OFFERING TO BE AN INSIDE CONTACT?
YES. AND SOMETHING A LITTLE MORE MATERIAL.
SHU-TORUN HAS A HUGE TITHE IT FULFILLS TO THE EMPIRE. IT WAS RAISED WHEN I TOOK THE THRONE AFTER THE ORE BARON'S REBELLION...
...BUT THE EMPIRE IS UNAWARE OF OUR TRUE PRODUCTION.
WE HAVE STOCKPILED... CONSIDERABLE RESOURCES.
YOU MAY BE A QUEEN IN NEED OF AN ALLIANCE... BUT WE'RE A REBELLION IN NEED OF A FLEET.
OH, ARTOO! FINALLY, SOMETHING IN MY FIELD OF EXPERTISE!
DIPLOMACY! IT'S BEEN SO LONG!


HIDING? THAT'S NOT VERY JEDI-LIKE.
I'M NOT HIDING.
THIS HAS BEEN A SPLENDID WORKOUT. IT'S GOOD TO KNOW IT STILL TAKES MORE THAN A SABER TO TROUBLE ME.
YEAH?
HOW ABOUT AN ION TORPEDO?

CYBERNETICS.
IMPRESSIVE WEAPONS.
UNTIL YOU TURN THEM OFF.


THIS HAS BEEN AN INTERESTING CONVERSATION, QUEEN TRIOS.
THE NEXT STEP--
LEIA, WE HAVE TO G--
WHO IS *SHE?*
THIS IS QUEEN TRIOS.
PLEASE, CALL ME TRIOS.
AND THE BOY IS RIGHT-- YOU REALLY SHOULD LEAVE.
I'LL STAY HERE AND OPEN THE PASSAGES FOR THE GUARDS LATE ENOUGH FOR YOU ALL TO MAKE YOUR ESCAPE, BUT EARLY ENOUGH TO REMOVE SUSPICION FROM ME...
REMOVE SUSPICION FOR *WHAT?*
IT'S COMPLICATED, SIR. SKULDUGGERY IS AFOOT.
UNDERSTOOD, TRIOS.
GIVE US FIVE MINUTES.
WHO *WAS* THAT?
JUST WHAT I WAS LOOKING FOR.
A LITTLE MORE HOPE.

HOW FAR UNTIL THE BIG HOLE, UBIN?
A KLICK TO THE RIFT AND CLOSING, HAN.
GOOD. GET READY TO PULL BACK TO THE *FALCON* AND GET THE HELL OUT OF HERE.
HAN!
GOOD TO SEE YOU, PRINCESS. CUTTING IT CLOSE.
WE NEED IT CLOSER. THERE'S GOING TO BE IMPERIAL REINFORCEMENTS SWEEPING IN HERE ANY MINUTE.
OH. RIGHT. THANK *YOU*.

OKAY...IF THE IMPERIALS GET IN HERE, THEY CAN USE THE BRAKES AND SAVE THIS HEAP.
YOU NEED TO LEAVE A REARGUARD TO STAY ON THE BRIDGE TO STOP THEM. EVERYONE ELSE CAN ESCAPE.
I'LL LEAD IT.
GO. REMEMBER US.
I AM NOT LETTING YOU DO THIS.
WHAT OTHER CHOICE IS THERE?
YOU'RE WITH ME, UBIN. EVERYONE ELSE, SET UP BARRICADES.
WE'LL BE BACK.

GOOD LUCK, REBELS.
TRIOS TO ALL IMPERIALS!
I'VE CIRCUMVENTED THE CONTROLS. ALL ROUTES TO THE BRIDGE ARE NOW OPEN!
STOP THEM!
SINCE WHEN IS HAN GIVING ORDERS?
I LIKE IT. IT SUITS HIM.
FIRE!

WE CAN'T JUST LEAVE THEM!
WE'RE NOT! YOU JUST DON'T GET IT.
I NEED A LIVE CO-PILOT TO PULL THIS OFF.
DISTANCE, 50 METERS TO THE INFERNAL CHASM AND CLOSING!
OH, PLEASE, CAN WE LEAVE?
WHERE'S HAN? I'M GOING TO COME BACK FROM THE DEAD JUST TO THROTTLE HIM...
HE'LL BE BACK. HE ALWAYS COMES BACK.
SO FAR.

WHAT?
DON'T JUST STAND THERE SLACK-JAWED IN WONDER AT OUR PILOTING SKILLS! GET EVERYONE ABOARD!
WE CAN'T HOLD THIS! STABILIZERS ARE GOING CRAZY.
SAME AS EVERYONE IN THIS DAMN OUTFIT.
DIVERT ENERGY FROM THE SHIELDS. WE JUST NEED ANOTHER FEW SECONDS...
LUKE! QUICKLY!

I'M SORRY, QUEEN.
THAT WAS YOUR PEOPLE'S PRIDE.
YOU HAVE TO BE PHILOSOPHICAL, COMMANDER. IN THE LONG RUN, WE WILL BE TRIUMPHANT.
AND PLEASE, CALL ME TRIOS.

NaJedha.
I'LL RECOVER. THE PLANET WON'T...
...BUT THE EMPIRE WILL NOT PROFIT FROM HER DEATH THROES.
WE'LL GUARD THE ASHES OF JEDHA UNTIL IT'S GONE, THEN MOVE ON.
THE DREAM WILL NOT DIE, EVEN WHEN JEDHA DOES.
WE'RE DIFFERENT, BUT WE CAN WORK TOGETHER, BENTHIC.
THAT'S WHAT "ALLIANCE" MEANS.

HEY, UBIN. I HEAR DYING HEROICALLY IS ONE HELL OF A THING, BUT IT'S NOT THE ONLY THING.
THE BEST THING ABOUT LIVING HEROICALLY?
MEDAL CEREMONIES.
GOOD WORK, SOLDIER.
IS THAT REALLY YOUR MEDAL?
NAH, I GOT A BUNCH OF COPIES. I SELL ONE OFF TO SOME RUBE ANY TIME I NEED A FEW EXTRA CREDITS.
I'LL PRETEND I DIDN'T HEAR THAT. YOU NEVER CHANGE. EXCEPT...
NICE WORK WITH YOUR COMMAND, CAPTAIN.
PLEASE, DON'T. THAT WAS A ONE-OFF.
THAT ISN'T ME.

GFGFGGFFHHHHH!
AND YOU CAN CLAM UP, TOO, FURBALL.
WHAT NEXT, PRINCESS?
HMMM...
I THINK THAT'S ENOUGH SIFTING THROUGH THE ASHES.

NOW WE REBUILD.

STAR WARS™
NEXT ISSUE: